

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

PHASES IN THE PROCESS

Master plan development is based on and influenced by existing statutes, administrative codes, scientific data, resource capabilities and management opportunities, judgment of resource management professionals, and public input. Master planning proceeds in three main phases.

Phase 1 involves preparatory work that provides a foundation for the master plan. Current, reliable information on a property's or property grouping's condition, resources, and public uses is gathered and assessed to determine what statewide and regional goals and objectives the property or group is best suited to address or provide, using the framework of Ecological Landscapes for resource management and SCORP regions for recreation management (see [A Regional Approach](#) for a more detailed description of this). The scope of the planning effort is determined in this phase, and any sideboards established (e.g., particular issues, challenges, or opportunities that the plan should address).

A formal public announcement is made that a planning process has been initiated. Department staff then hold a public meeting at a local venue to share information about the properties and the planning process, how the public can remain involved in the process, and gather public input on important issues to be addressed in the master plan.

Phase 2 involves the development of a draft master plan. Using the foundational information and public input gathered in Phase 1, preliminary property goals and resource management and public use strategies are developed and evaluated. Depending on the property types and issues involved, some or many alternatives are evaluated. In addition, potential environmental and socio-economic impacts that may arise from implementing the master plan are analyzed. When completed, the draft master plan is presented to the public for review and comment at another public open house meeting. Public input is summarized and considered, and any necessary revisions made to the draft plan.

Phase 3 involves the preparation of the final draft of the master plan and its presentation to the [Natural Resources Board](#) for approval at one of their regularly scheduled meetings. Another opportunity for public input is available during this phase by following the [NRB's public participation guidelines](#).

ELEMENTS OF MASTER PLANS

Master plans typically contain the following elements:

- Maps and descriptions of existing and proposed:
 - Property project boundaries
 - Acres owned, eased, or leased and acquisition authority for each property
 - Recreational facilities and other infrastructure on each property
 - Habitats and species present or to be restored on each property
 - Land management classifications for each property



- Goals, objectives, and prescriptions for management and use on each property, as well as an overview of any special issues or needs.
- Plans or initiatives for resource management or development and operation of recreational facilities that are unique or different from standard practices.
- A summary of information considered in the development of the master plan.
- A description of resource management and public use alternatives that were considered during plan development but not selected, and an explanation of why they were not selected.
- An analysis of the ecological, socio-economic, and recreational impacts (both positive and negative) that are anticipated if the master plan is implemented. ***Note that this item and the one in the previous bullet are not included in the final version of the plan (after approval by the NRB).***
- A master plan implementation communication plan and contact person(s).

MASTER PLAN MONITORING

Monitoring and reporting on property management activities is an essential component of DNR's integrated ecosystem management system. A monitoring program provides essential data for adaptive management – checking results and making management corrections when needed so as to achieve the desired results and minimize undesirable impacts. Master plans set goals and objectives describing desired future conditions for each property. An on-going monitoring program is essential if managers are to know whether the plan is achieving the desired results. Master plan accomplishments for properties with NR 44-compliant plans are submitted on an annual basis.

VARIANCES AND AMENDMENTS

Once approved by the Natural Resources Board, master plans establish the authorized management and development that take place on a property. Importantly, only those management and development activities identified and described in the master plan may be pursued by the department. However, there are circumstances when conditions change or unforeseen events occur such that the department concludes that management that is not specified in the plan or that is different from what is in the plan is appropriate or necessary.

When this occurs, the department goes through a plan variance or amendment process as outlined in [Ch. NR 44.04\(4\), Wis. Adm. Code](#). Plan variances and amendments are tools that may be used to make changes to specific sections of a master plan without going through a full plan review and revision. This process evaluates needs, opportunities, and impacts of the proposed change and includes opportunities for public input.

The difference between a variance and an amendment relates to the nature of the proposed change. A **variance** is intended for changes or additions to management prescriptions that are consistent with a property's land management classification and do not constitute a modification of the management or use objectives described in the existing plan. For example, if a master plan called for 10 miles of horseback riding trails on a property and the department wished to add an additional four miles to meet growing demand, it would pursue a variance to the master plan. Or, if a master plan called for grassland management on a property but did not specifically mention grazing as a management technique and the department wished to incorporate it, a variance would be used.



An **amendment** is used when a management action or use is proposed that is not consistent with the existing management classification but is still consistent with the property's overall vision and goals. For example, a change to provide primitive camping on a property where camping was not considered when the master plan was developed would require an amendment. Or, if there was an opportunity to provide a snowmobile trail across a property that connected to new regional trails outside the property boundary, an amendment would be needed.

Proposed changes that are not compatible with a property's vision and goals require **plan revision**, which is a full review of the master plan.

Plan variances or amendments may be proposed at any time by the department or any person.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The DNR recognizes that sound planning is a partnership effort with the people it serves. For department efforts to manage and operate properties to succeed, there must be broad public support for the master plan. It is the department's experience that public support can be generated most effectively by soliciting and incorporating public input.

An early step in the planning process is to provide a strategy for how property users and the interested public can become involved in helping to develop the master plan. This **Public Participation Plan** describes how the department will solicit public input and review throughout the planning process, how the public can provide comments, and how the department will share information and make decisions related to the plan. There are key points when the department will release draft documents and ask for review and input (described below), but the public is encouraged to remain involved throughout the process. The Public Involvement Plan and all other pertinent documents are posted on the DNR's website.

There typically are three key points during the planning process when public input is sought:

- **Initiation of the plan:** At the beginning of the planning process, department staff hold an open-house meeting in a community near the property. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public about the planning process, share information about the property or property group, and gather feedback about future management direction for the property and on the Public Participation Plan. The public is asked to identify any important issues they believe should be addressed in the master plan.
- **Review of the draft master plan:** Once a draft plan has been completed, the document is posted on the DNR website and department staff hold another open-house meeting to present the major components of the draft plan, answer questions, and gather public comments.
- **Presentation of the final plan to the Natural Resources Board (NRB):** Based on public input, the draft plan is revised as appropriate and a final draft is prepared. This is then presented to the [Natural Resources Board](#) at one of their regularly scheduled meetings. These meetings are open to the public, and citizens have the opportunity to provide input about the master plan directly to the NRB by following the [NRB's public participation guidelines](#).

In addition to the public open-house meetings, the public can access information about a master planning project on the DNR's website. The department maintains a webpage for each master planning project. This page provides an overview of the project and properties, describes the status of the project, including any upcoming meetings



or other updates, and contains pertinent planning documents. The public can also sign up to receive email updates about the project.

The department is in routine contact with local units of government, state and federal agencies, and Native American tribes when developing or updating master plans.

